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Eighteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

I. Introduction

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to resolution 1826 (2008), by which the Security Council renewed the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the French Licorne force until 31 January 2009, and requested me to report, no later than 15 October 2008, on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, including on preparations for elections. The report covers major developments in Côte d'Ivoire since my report of 10 July 2008 (S/2008/451).

II. Political developments

2. The political atmosphere in Côte d'Ivoire remained positive during the period under review. All political parties intensified their information and sensitization campaign activities throughout the country as preparations for the presidential election gathered pace. Political leaders and party activists were able to move freely throughout the country, including the hitherto volatile western region and the north. The ruling Front populaire ivorien political party held a national convention in Yamoussoukro on 30 August, where it nominated President Laurent Gbagbo as its candidate for the presidential election. The Vice-President of the party, Simone Gbagbo, conducted a two-week campaign in the northern part of the country, during which she visited Béoumi, Bouaké, Dabakala, Katiola and Tafiré. During the campaign, she called for the accelerated implementation of provisions of the Ouagadougou Agreement that relate to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the Forces nouvelles and for the establishment of unified armed forces before the elections.

3. The opposition Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire conducted a one-week sensitization campaign in the region of the Vallée du Bandama while the party's leader and candidate for the presidential election, former President Henri Konan Bédié, toured the north for a six-day period in August, visiting Béoumi, Bouaké, Dabakala, Djébonoua, Katiola and Sakassou. Senior officials of Alassane Ouattara's Rassemblement des républicains party, including its Secretary-General, Henriette Diabaté, launched similar campaigns in the south-east of the country in August. During the night of 10 August, groups of youth loyal to the ruling party stormed a hotel where Mrs. Diabaté and her delegation stayed and attempted to attack her

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party's followers. Mrs. Diabaté was able to return to Abidjan safely with the help of the Ivorian security forces. On 4 October, the Rassemblement des républicains held its national convention in Yamoussoukro, where Alassane Ouattara was designated as the party's candidate in the upcoming presidential election. Meanwhile, civil society groups also intensified their activities. They adopted a code of conduct to govern their activities during the electoral period and created a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement.

4. As part of his regular consultations, my Special Representative, Mr. Y. J. Choi, continued to meet with the Ivorian political leaders, including President Gbagbo, Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, Mr. Bédié and Mr. Ouattara, to exchange views on the status of preparations for the electoral process and UNOCI support for the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement. He consulted the leaders on the comprehensive security plan for the elections, which was developed jointly by the Ivorian security forces, UNOCI and Licorne. In addition, he held regular consultations with the Facilitator of the Ivorian peace process, the President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, on outstanding issues relating to the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement.

5. The Facilitator convened two meetings of the Evaluation and Monitoring Committee, comprising the representatives of the signatories of the Ouagadougou Agreement, which was created to monitor the implementation of the Agreement and to address any arising obstacles. The first meeting took place on 10 July and was attended by Prime Minister Soro, members of the international consultative organ, the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission, Robert Mambé, and the French Secretary of State for International Cooperation, Alain Joyandet. At the meeting, ways of addressing the logistical constraints that were impeding the launching of the identification and voter registration processes were discussed. The second meeting was held from 15 to 17 September and focused on measures to resolve the long-standing issue of the ranks and numbers of Forces nouvelles personnel who should be integrated into the new army. President Gbagbo also maintained regular contacts with the Facilitator and visited Ouagadougou on 28 July for consultations on the peace process.

III. Security situation

6. The overall security situation in the country remained generally stable. However, a number of worrying security incidents occurred in Abidjan in early October. On 4 October, groups of youths loyal to the ruling party reportedly prevented the identification and voter registration process from proceeding at Cocody in Abidjan, citing the absence of officials from the National Institute of Statistics. On 6 October, armed assailants attempted to enter the residence of the Minister of Construction and Housing, Marcel Amon Tanoh, who is also the campaign coordinator of the Rassemblement des républicains opposition party.

7. In other areas, the main security incidents reported during the period under review emanated from demonstrations by disgruntled personnel of the Forces nouvelles and the national Defence and Security Forces. The Forces nouvelles elements continued to express discontent over arrangements for their integration into the envisaged new army and reintegration opportunities. On 18 August, over 200 cantoned Forces nouvelles combatants demonstrated in Bouaké demanding

payment of monthly allowances, while Forces nouvelles elements who were previously securing mobile court hearings demanded payment of outstanding bonuses. Protests continued intermittently until the end of August. On 26 July, elements of the mixed brigade at N'Gattadolikro demonstrated over outstanding allowances. On 26 September, elements of the Ivorian Defence and Security Forces in Daoukro and Yamoussoukro protested over the Government's failure to pay war bonuses. High-level interventions by Forces nouvelles officials and Prime Minister Soro helped to restore calm in Bouaké.

8. In other areas, tension between communities over land and other disputes, especially in the west, as well as strikes and demonstrations to protest against the rising cost of living in urban areas, continued to be a source of concern. In the western part of the country, attacks by armed highway robbers created an acute sense of insecurity. On 10 July, two members of the integrated command centre's mixed brigade stationed in Famienkro were killed in an ambush by unidentified individuals, while patrolling in the area. Following the incident, the mixed brigade elements vacated Famienkro and refused to return. On 19 July, UNOCI and the Licorne forces intervened to separate elements of the Forces nouvelles and a youth group, who had clashed in Bouna, in the north-east of the country. From 12 to 15 August, members of a civil society organization demonstrated violently against the exploitation of natural resources by Forces nouvelles elements in the Bondoukou area, in the east. Also, violent inter-community clashes were reported at a village in the north-east on 3 September, resulting in the death of eight people and several injured.

9. There is still an atmosphere of insecurity in the western part of the country, as well as in parts of the former zone of confidence, as a result of continuing indiscriminate attacks by unidentified highway robbers, coupled with violence, including rape of women. The situation remains particularly serious in towns and villages along the Duékoué-Bangolo road, notably in Binao near Bangolo, as well as Blody and Toazeo near Duékoué.

10. UNOCI has prepared a comprehensive assessment of the security situation in the period leading to and immediately after the elections, including a detailed threat analysis, as well as measures to minimize elections-related security risks and threats. Existing resources and arrangements, including the mediation and arbitration role of the Facilitator; the certification role of my Special Representative; monitoring and observation of the elections by local and international stakeholders; the permanent consultative mechanism among the Ivorian political leaders; the constructive working relationship between the President and the Prime Minister; UNOCI and Licorne's military and police resources; and the solid working relationship currently existing between the commanders of the national Defence and Security Forces, the Forces nouvelles, Licorne and UNOCI should all contribute towards minimizing these security risks and threats. UNOCI has also indicated that, should the need arise, it would recommend resorting to the inter-mission reinforcement arrangements provided under resolution 1609 (2005) during the period before or after the elections. In the meantime, consultations are ongoing between the Facilitator and the Ivorian leaders on other measures to ensure adequate security arrangements during and after the elections.

11. In consultation with the leadership of the Defence and Security Forces and the Forces nouvelles, UNOCI has developed a security plan for the elections. The plan

seeks to provide comprehensive security, including the prevention of the illegal movement of armed groups across the borders of Côte d'Ivoire. It takes into account the potential threats identified in the UNOCI assessment, as well as the delicate period following the announcement of the election results. Meanwhile, UNOCI troops continue to patrol both in the country and jointly with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) along the Ivorian-Liberian border. During the reporting period, UNOCI also held coordination and liaison meetings with countries bordering Côte d'Ivoire, namely Ghana, Guinea and Burkina Faso, to set up security arrangements along the common borders in the light of the upcoming elections.

IV. Humanitarian situation

12. The general humanitarian situation in the country continued to improve during the reporting period, owing in part to the continued positive evolution of the peace process as well as the ongoing resettlement of internally displaced persons. In a major breakthrough, on 31 July the Humanitarian Coordinator in Côte d'Ivoire officially closed the transit centre for displaced persons in Guiglo. Meanwhile, humanitarian and development partners are considering appropriate response mechanisms to address the nutrition and food insecurity situation in the north of the country. According to the World Food Programme, the preliminary results of a nutritional survey carried out in July 2008 in collaboration with the national nutritional programme, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations revealed a high malnutrition rate of 17.5 per cent. This survey further revealed that the nutritional profile of populations in these areas had deteriorated sharply since the 2006 joint survey, in which the rate was approximately 12.5 per cent.

V. Economic recovery

13. On the economic front, real gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to increase by 2.5 per cent in 2008, supported by a recovery in the oil sector and the "peace dividend". Inflation is forecast to increase to 5 per cent in 2008, owing mainly to higher world food and energy prices. The forecast current-account balance shows a surplus equivalent to 4.7 per cent of GDP in 2008, owing to a widening trade surplus supported by high commodity prices. The implementation of structural measures designed to improve the business operating environment and support an economic recovery programme will take place only after the elections. These initiatives, in particular the much-needed reforms in the energy, cocoa and coffee sectors combined with improvements in transparency and public financial management, are expected to facilitate strong donor support for the reconstruction programme.

14. The Government successfully boosted its revenue performance in 2007, which has helped to reduce the fiscal deficit to 1.1 per cent of GDP. Revenue collection is expected to continue to rise in 2008 as the Government expands tax administration in the northern regions and oil revenues increase owing to higher oil prices. For 2008, total spending is expected to rise to 19.9 per cent of GDP and the fiscal deficit to narrow to 0.4 per cent of GDP. The economic forecast for 2008/2009 remains dependent on the political outlook, as the continued peaceful situation in the country

and the holding of the elections are the preconditions for economic recovery and the full resumption of donor support. Meanwhile, efforts led by the Ministry of Planning to formulate a poverty reduction strategy continued during the period under review, ahead of the expected validation of the strategy by end-October.

VI. Status of implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement

15. It will be recalled that the Ouagadougou Agreement, signed on 4 March 2007, sought to resolve the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire mainly by removing the zone of confidence that had divided the country; re-establishing State administration throughout the country; dismantling the militias, disarming combatants and enrolling them in a civic service programme; merging the Forces nouvelles and the national defence and security forces; simplifying and accelerating the identification of the population in order to facilitate the registration of those eligible to vote; and organizing a free, fair, open and transparent presidential election. Two supplementary agreements were signed on 28 November 2007. The first one designated a French private company, SAGEM, as the technical operator for the identification and voter registration, while the second one set new timelines for implementing the remaining key processes, namely, unification of the armed forces; disarmament and reintegration of combatants; restoration of State authority; identification of the population; voter registration and elections. The latter supplementary agreement envisaged elections taking place during the first semester of 2008 and provided for the cantonment of forces as well as the storage of weapons of the Forces nouvelles, instead of a comprehensive programme for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants before the elections. The election date was subsequently set for 30 November 2008.

A. Reunifying the country

16. In keeping with the provisions of the Ouagadougou Agreement, UNOCI dismantled the last observation post along the green line on 30 July. With the removal of all observation posts, the green line that replaced the zone of confidence has effectively ceased to exist. Mixed police units continued to patrol the former zone of confidence, even though their operational capacity remained limited owing to inadequate equipment and financial support.

17. The integrated command centre, which oversees the mixed police units and is responsible for implementing all the military and security aspects of the Ouagadougou Agreement, continued to build up its capacity with support from UNOCI and the Licorne force. Out of a total authorized strength of 668 personnel, the centre currently comprises 458 Government and Forces nouvelles military personnel: 214 elements based at the headquarters in Yamoussoukro and 244 deployed in the former zone of confidence as part of the mixed police units and supporting elements. Although the centre's communications capacity and mobility have improved, its operational effectiveness continues to be hampered by limited financial and logistical capabilities. Payment of allowances for food and fuel for the personnel of the command centre, including the mixed police units, has been erratic over the past several months.

18. UNOCI and the Licorne force continue to maintain an integrated implementation cell within the integrated command centre, comprising military, police and civilian personnel, to support the centre's planning and coordination capacity. UNOCI also continued to provide logistical support to the command centre, including transport assistance, communications support and office equipment.

B. Cantonment, demobilization and reintegration of combatants

19. As at 1 October, 11,364 Forces nouvelles personnel had been cantoned, out of a total strength of 34,678 combatants declared by the group. From the cantoned former combatants, 7,598 have chosen to be demobilized, including 802 foreign combatants (from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Togo), and 3,766 have expressed interest in joining the new national army. Only 10 weapons and some ammunition were collected. Of the Forces nouvelles elements cantoned, 455 female combatants have been demobilized, 28 of whom have volunteered to join the new army.

20. The National Programme for Reinsertion and Community Rehabilitation, which is supposed to absorb 7,000 ex-combatants, continues to face considerable financial problems and capacity limitations. The programme has received only $10 million from the Government, out of the $32.5 million expected for 2008. Financial constraints have compelled it to scale down its programmes and close most of its offices around the country. Meanwhile, although the national civic service programme has increased its capacity, it will be unable to absorb the expected caseload of 15,000 former combatants by the end of October owing to a lack of agreement between the Ivorian Government and the Forces nouvelles. Meanwhile, several donors, including the World Bank, United Nations agencies and the European Union, have launched programmes for the reinsertion of former combatants and youth-at-risk.

21. The Peacebuilding Support Office has also approved $4 million to fund 1,000 microprojects for the short-term reinsertion of over 5,000 combatants, pending their absorption into the long-term reintegration programme. Following consultations with the Forces nouvelles, my Special Representative conducted an extended tour throughout the country to sensitize former combatants and launch the microprojects in August. As of 1 October, three microprojects have been launched, benefiting 30 ex-combatants. Fourteen additional projects have been approved, which once implemented will benefit 129 ex-combatants. The Ivorian Government as well as the leadership of the Forces nouvelles and militias have welcomed this initiative, which will provide alternative livelihoods for ex-combatants and help to consolidate stability in the period leading to the elections.

C. Disarmament and dismantling of militias

22. The integrated command centre and the National Programme for Reintegration and Community Rehabilitation have completed the registration and profiling of the militias in the western part of the country. Although the final figures have not yet been released, the centre reported that the number of militia personnel profiled exceeds the 1,019 armed militias previously listed by the Government. The

Government has not yet determined the arrangements for disarming, dismantling and reintegrating the militia personnel.

D. Unification of the defence and security forces

23. Apart from the establishment of the integrated command centre and the mixed police units, the unification of the defence and security forces remained stalled because of continued disagreement between the parties on the numbers and ranks of the Forces nouvelles personnel to be integrated into the new national army and the police force. As previously reported, in January 2008 the Facilitator had proposed that 5,000 of the full strength of 35,000 personnel declared by the Forces nouvelles would be integrated in the new army, while 4,000 would join the national police and gendarmerie, 20,000 would be absorbed in the civic service and 6,000 would benefit from reintegration programmes. An Evaluation and Monitoring Committee meeting is scheduled for mid-October and is expected to address the issue.

E. Restoration of State administration throughout the country

24. While substantial progress has been made in redeploying the government officials that were displaced from the north during the conflict, those officials, including the préfets, are not yet able to exercise real authority as the Forces nouvelles zone commanders are reluctant to relinquish their administrative, security and financial authority in the areas under their control. The lack of adequate logistical and financial resources, as well as the protracted delays in re-establishing the judicial system and adequate police presence in the north also hampers the work of the redeployed State officials. The Ministry of Justice is considering retaining the judiciary personnel who were deployed in the north to support the electoral process. The effective redeployment of the judiciary and the ability of the préfets to function without impediments will be crucial for the smooth running and credibility of the electoral process.

25. The Ministry of Justice has submitted to the Government an operational matrix identifying the needs and the stages of redeployment of the justice administration to the north, centre and west that will be presented to the donors for funding. The four main categories of officials to be redeployed include magistrates, correctional officers, court registry and court staff. The Ministry is also drafting decrees for the appointment of magistrates. It would be crucial for the 10 courts located in the affected regions to begin functioning before the provisional electoral list is published, as they would adjudicate the complaints related to the voter registration process.

26. UNOCI has also begun a survey of the Ivorian legal education system, to both assess the current training capacities and identify target areas for capacity-building and technical assistance. Donor-funded rehabilitation work in the correctional facilities located in areas of the country controlled by the Forces nouvelles was completed in Korhogo and Bouaké. Further rehabilitation work, under way in eight other facilities, is expected to be completed by December 2008.

F. Identification of the population and voter registration

27. It will be recalled that the Ouagadougou Agreement sought to accelerate the identification of those Ivorians who were eligible to vote. In that regard, the Agreement provided that all individuals who were on the voters' list in 2000 would be automatically eligible to receive national identity cards and voters' cards; the ongoing mobile courts would issue duplicate birth certificates to Ivorians aged 18 years and older, whose births had never been recorded in civil registers, to enable them to register to vote; and the civil registers that had been lost or destroyed during the conflict would be reconstituted to enable all other Ivorians who might not have been included on the 2000 voters' list to register to vote.

28. In my last report, I stated that the fourth round of the mobile court operations officially had ended on 15 May. Following the recommendation of the Permanent Consultative Framework meeting of 9 May, supplementary mobile courts were deployed on 27 August to issue duplicate birth certificates to applicants in areas that had not been adequately covered during the main operation. In that regard, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights deployed 50 teams to 34 jurisdictions throughout the country. At the conclusion of the operation on 25 September, a total of 35,370 declaratory judgements in lieu of birth certificates had been issued. Of these, 32,239 were issued to Ivorian nationals and 3,131 to foreigners. The number of declaratory judgements issued in lieu of birth certificates since the mobile courts operations were launched in September 2007 stands at 750,000.

29. The identification of the population and the voter registration processes were launched on 15 September, subsequent to the promulgation of a decree on 14 September which stipulated that these two crucial processes would be conducted over a period of 45 days. As of 1 October, 5,849 Ivorians had been registered as voters. Although the pace of voter registration and identification is expected to increase as more teams are deployed throughout the country, it is unlikely that the process will be completed within the 45 days stipulated in the 14 September presidential decree.

30. The operation to reconstitute the civil registers and restore birth, marriage and death records that were lost or destroyed during the crisis was launched by the Minister of Justice on 15 May. The initial stages of the exercise involved preparing an inventory of the existing as well as destroyed and lost civil registers. The United Nations Office of Project Services, funded by the European Union, is providing technical assistance to this operation. Article 2 of the presidential decree adopted on 14 September stipulates that registration on the voters' roll of those applicants affected by the reconstitution operation should not change the time frame of the publication of the provisional electoral list.

G. The electoral process

31. Several decrees relating to the electoral process, including those outlining the modalities of the voting exercise and specifications for electoral materials, were issued on 4 September. As indicated earlier, a decree stipulating that the voter registration process would be conducted over a 45-day period was issued on 14 September. An amendment to the electoral code aimed at compressing the time frame for the publication of the voters' roll, as well as for the appeals and challenges regarding the voters' roll, is expected to be put forward soon.

32. The Independent Electoral Commission and other institutions tasked to implement the key elections-related tasks, such as SAGEM and the Institute of National Statistics continue to face serious challenges in establishing and executing a comprehensive logistical plan for the elections, covering the period from the identification and voter registration to the distribution and collection of electoral materials throughout the country. The key tasks that must be accomplished for the successful conduct of the identification and voter registration processes include: the setting up of 70 coordination centres; the establishment of 11,009 registration sites; the operationalization of 6,000 identification kits, including VSAT equipment; the selection, training and deployment of 35,000 identification agents; and the launching of an effective sensitization campaign. For election day, some 22,000 polling stations within the 11,009 polling sites are foreseen. Furthermore, it is envisaged that a total of 66,000 polling agents will be recruited. There are also 415 local electoral offices throughout the country that are to be manned by 14,000 personnel.

33. As of 1 October, the Independent Electoral Commission reported that 43 of the 70 Coordination Centres were operational, and that refurbishment operations were ongoing at the remaining sites. All 35,000 identification agents have been recruited and are in the process of being trained and deployed. UNOCI and United Nations agencies continue to support the registration process by providing technical expertise, logistical assistance and equipment. In August, UNOCI helped to airlift 1,500 SAGEM registration kits from Europe to Abidjan in order to avoid further delays in the identification and voter registration process. The mission has also agreed to assist in the transport of registration materials to 10 coordination centres located in remote areas.

34. The UNOCI certification cell is closely monitoring the key aspects of the electoral process, including voter registration, and collecting critical information that will enable my Special Representative to exercise his certification mandate. The five-criteria framework, i.e. peace, inclusiveness, state media, electoral list and results, as defined by my Special Representative and accepted by all parties, will provide a solid foundation for fulfilling this critical mandate. The fundamental principle that will guide my Special Representative in his certification role is to assist Ivorians in their effort to hold open, free, fair and transparent elections.

35. As the most significant step before polling, the validation of the electoral list will present a crucial test for the certification capacity of my Special Representative. In that regard, UNOCI has already started informal consultations with all the protagonists, including the key political players (President Gbagbo, Mr. Bédié and Mr. Ouattara), the Facilitator, and the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission. In cooperation with the Independent Electoral Commission and other authorities, UNOCI will help to safeguard both the process and the result of the elections in close cooperation with the electoral observers. As mandated by Security Council resolution 1765 (2007), the mission has also established a small cell to coordinate the deployment of international observers.

36. Since the launch of the identification and voter registration processes on 15 September, the delays due to technical and logistical challenges have proven greater than expected. A meeting of the Permanent Consultative Framework of the Ouagadougou Agreement is scheduled for the end of October to address this issue, especially its potential impact on the current electoral timeline.

VII. Financial support for the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement

37. Efforts to mobilize funds to support the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement continued during the period under review. The basket funds established and administered by the United Nations Development Programme to support the electoral process and post-crisis peace consolidation activities are fully operational and continue to receive external funding from an increasingly diverse donor base. To date, $20 million have been allocated to elections-related activities, while $10 million have been earmarked for post-crisis peace consolidation programmes. While the electoral process is fully funded, the National Programme for Reintegration and Community Rehabilitation and the national civic service programme continue to face obstacles, as emphasized in paragraph 20 above.

38. Following my decision to declare Côte d'Ivoire eligible to receive funding from the Peacebuilding Fund, the United Nations and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire have developed a priority plan to address urgent peacebuilding needs. Some $5 million were approved on 14 July, of which $4 million have been allocated to support reinsertion projects, while $1 million will sustain the facilitation efforts undertaken by the Office of the Special Representative of the Facilitator in Abidjan. Reintegration projects are implemented in cooperation with the National Programme for Reintegration and Community Rehabilitation and include counselling of former combatants, income-generating activities, and microprojects. Additional reintegration efforts are being planned in collaboration with the national civic service programme, and include the establishment of skills training centres. As the country prepares for elections, support from the Peacebuilding Fund will remain vital to consolidate hard-earned gains.

VIII. Deployment of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

A. Military component

39. As at 1 October, military strength of UNOCI stood at 8,017 personnel, comprising 7,738 troops, 190 military observers and 89 staff officers, against the authorized strength of 8,115. The mission's military personnel currently include 77 women. Of the mission's 11 battalions, 5 are deployed in the western part of the country, 4 in the east and 2 in Abidjan. One aviation unit, three engineering companies, one transport company, one Special Forces Company, one Signals Company and one Support Company are providing enabling capacity and operational reserve to the force. The sous-groupement de sécurité, composed of 279 personnel, continues to provide close protection to members of the Government and other political leaders. In keeping with the memorandum of understanding between the two forces, Licorne continues to maintain a quick-reaction capability to support UNOCI in extremis. The strength of Licorne currently stands at 1,800 personnel.

40. UNOCI continues to consolidate its troop deployments throughout the country. As part of the consolidation process, the force has reduced its camps from 44 to 24 and enhanced its capacity to conduct extended patrols covering all parts of the country. However, both UNOCI and Licorne are still being denied access to Divo by

the local authorities. Meanwhile, a new deployment location has been established in Dabakala, in the north, while efforts are continuing to establish three new camps in the areas of Divo, Issia and Adzopé. In line with its revised concept of operations, the mission has increased force mobility to provide security for the electoral and other key processes as outlined in the Ouagadougou Agreement. In addition to conducting joint and synchronized patrols with UNMIL along the border with Liberia, UNOCI held coordination and liaison meetings with authorities from Ghana, Guinea and Burkina Faso, with a view to strengthening border security arrangements in preparation for elections.

B. Police component

41. As at 1 October 2008, UNOCI police strength stood at 1,136 personnel against an authorized strength of 1,200, including 388 individual police advisers and 748 personnel in 6 formed police units. The mission's police personnel include 18 female officers.

42. The police component continued to focus on supporting, mentoring and advising the Ivorian national police and the mixed police units that maintain law and order in the former zone of confidence. It also maintained contact with the national police and gendarmerie, and conducted joint patrols and investigations primarily in the northern part of the country with the assistance of the 600 Forces nouvelles auxiliary personnel trained by UNOCI in 2006. Furthermore, the UNOCI police component continued to provide support to the integrated command centre and provided advice on reforming the Ivorian national police.

IX. Human rights

43. The overall human rights situation continued to improve during the reporting period, with a drastic reduction in politically driven violations. Nevertheless, several serious violations were observed during this period in both the government-controlled areas and in the part of the country controlled by the Forces nouvelles. These violations included the disproportionate use of force by the police during law enforcement operations, racketeering, torture and ill-treatment. The insecurity in the western and northern parts of the country, as well as in parts of the former zone of confidence, remains of great concern and has impacted negatively on the full enjoyment of basic human rights. Increasing indiscriminate attacks by unidentified highway robbers, coupled with violence and rape of women, pose a daily threat to the right to life, to physical integrity and to the safety and security of persons and goods. The situation remains particularly serious in towns and villages along the Duékoué-Bangolo road, notably in Binao near Bangolo, as well as Blody and Toazeo near Duékoué.

44. The failure of law enforcement officials to arrest or identify the perpetrators of those violations has exacerbated the fragile relationships within ethnically mixed communities, leading to intercommunity clashes characterized by attacks and retaliatory counter-attacks. Investigations conducted by local authorities into violations brought to their attention by UNOCI have often proved unproductive; the low level of prosecution for such cases has heightened the pervading sense of impunity in the country.

45. With regard to the human rights situation in Forces nouvelles-controlled areas, multiple infringements of the right to life were reported, as were several cases of torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest and detention. Forces nouvelles elements frequently extorted money from victims and their family members for the release of arbitrarily detained persons. The situation remained marked by the persistence of impunity, given the absence of a functioning justice system amidst racketeering by Forces nouvelles elements. As indicated earlier, in Bouaké, cantoned Forces nouvelles elements staged several street demonstrations to demand immediate payment of monthly allowances and war bonuses, resulting in several infringements of basic human rights, including physical assault, violations of the right to property and interference with the freedom of movement. With regard to the situation of women and girls, several instances of physical and sexual violence were reported, particularly in the western part of the country in relation to armed attacks by highway robbers.

46. Upon the invitation of the Ivorian Government, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Council on the adverse effects of the illicit movement and dumping of toxic and dangerous products and wastes on the enjoyment of human rights, Okechukwu Ibeanu, visited Côte d'Ivoire from 3 to 8 August. The purpose of his visit was to assess the situation since the dumping of toxic waste in Abidjan in August 2006, which tragically resulted in at least 16 deaths and more than 100,000 other victims. At the end of his visit, the Special Rapporteur urged the Government to mobilize all available resources for victims to get the justice they deserve and to quickly receive adequate compensation. Many victims continue to experience health problems. The Special Rapporteur also appealed to the Government to intensify the pursuit of criminal proceedings that are pending against individuals and corporate bodies implicated in this disaster.

47. Meanwhile, UNOCI continued to raise awareness of child rights and child protection issues, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1460 (2003). The mission conducted outreach activities for 4,330 partners from non-governmental organizations, civil society groups and government institutions, and has so far further sensitized, in 2008, a total of 4,678 UNOCI personnel on child protection issues.

48. In collaboration with its partners, UNOCI monitored and reported on violations perpetrated against children, in line with resolution 1612 (2005), and continued to engage in a dialogue with armed groups so as to facilitate the implementation of provisions of Security Council resolution 1539 (2004). While there has been a decline in the number of reported cases of abduction and killing of children in Côte d'Ivoire, I am concerned about the persistent sexual violence committed against children. In line with the recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, UNOCI continued to provide technical assistance to the Ivorian Government in its efforts to create a National Commission for children affected by the armed conflict, and to establish a national action plan against sexual violence.

X. Gender

49. In accordance with resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security, the Gender Unit has continued to promote gender mainstreaming in

UNOCI policies and programmes. UNOCI collaborated with national partners to elaborate a draft national action plan against sexual violence for consideration by the Government. In the same vein, the mission provided specialized training on sexual and gender-based violence to local women's leaders, police officers, gendarmes, civil servants and traditional leaders. Within the context of cooperation with other institutions, UNOCI provided gender and peacekeeping training support to military, police and civilian personnel at an African Union Senior Mission Leaders' course in Botswana.

XI. HIV/AIDS

50. UNOCI continued to mainstream HIV/AIDS awareness in the mission's activities. In this regard, the Mission partnered with governmental corrections services and sensitized 794 prison inmates and 72 corrections officers on HIV/AIDS. The mission also worked with UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to implement a joint project on HIV/AIDS in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. The mission and UNFPA fine-tuned, with non-governmental organizations and the Ministry of Defence, modalities to further implement two projects that had been launched in June, with regard to the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections among commercial sex workers and the Ivorian security forces. Furthermore, UNOCI sensitized 3,417 mission personnel on HIV/AIDS, while a total of 170 new peer educators were trained to conduct sensitization activities within their respective battalions. Voluntary counselling and testing services were provided to 1,546 mission personnel.

XII. Personnel conduct and discipline

51. Investigations by the United Nations and the concerned troop-contributing country into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel of a UNOCI military contingent are ongoing. As I indicated in my previous report (S/2008/451), the results of the investigations will be made public once completed. In the meantime, UNOCI, through the conduct and discipline unit, continued to sensitize its military, police and civilian personnel on my zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. As part of its public awareness campaign, UNOCI maintained contact with civil society organizations to ensure that local populations are sensitized on United Nations standards of conduct.

XIII. Media monitoring and public information

52. UNOCI continued its efforts to inform the Ivorian population about the peace process and the support the mission provides towards the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement, in particular with regard to the electoral process. UNOCI has assisted the Office of the Prime Minister and the Independent Electoral Commission in devising and implementing a communications strategy, including the production of radio spots, publications and posters in support of the identification and voter registration processes.

53. UNOCI continued to encourage civil society to take an active role in promoting the peace process by organizing workshops, seminars, and meetings with

its four main target pillars: the media, women, traditional chiefs and youth groups. UNOCI also closely monitored the Ivorian media, and organized training seminars for the national media and community radio stations to sensitize them on their role during the electoral period.

54. In an effort to facilitate the redeployment of UNOCI personnel to the southern cities of Adzopé and Issia, the mission organized public events in these locations. Elsewhere, as UNOCI military personnel redeployed, the mission's radio station, ONUCI FM, continued to expand its coverage area as well. Radio transmitters were installed in Dabakala, Tabou and Boundiali, bringing the total number of transmitters to 23 nationwide. Meanwhile, the mission's radio station continued to provide information on the peace process through its news, current affairs and feature programmes. In addition, the mission launched a special communication campaign to support the 1,000 microprojects initiative.

XIV. Safety and security of personnel

55. Although the general security situation in the country is assessed as relatively calm, challenges pertaining to the general maintenance of law and order continue to affect the safety and security of United Nations personnel. Urban crime, roadside banditry, extortion, rape and murder are increasing throughout the country. During recent incidents in Bondoukou, United Nations-marked vehicles were stoned and one staff member was slightly injured. National staff remain under threat of being attacked in their houses, as shown by a robbery in September in the house of a national female staff member. This was the third attack on national staff, all of whom were women. Meanwhile, minimum operational security standards, including residential, are being strictly enforced.

XV. Financial implications

56. The General Assembly, by its resolution 62/254, appropriated the amount of $475.4 million for the maintenance of UNOCI for the period from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNOCI beyond 31 January 2009, the cost of maintaining the Operation until 30 June 2009 would be limited to the amounts approved by the General Assembly.

57. As at 31 July 2008, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNOCI amounted to $61.3 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $3,568.7 million.

58. Reimbursement of troop- and contingent-owned equipment costs has been made for the period up to 31 August 2008 and 31 March 2008, respectively.

XVI. Observations

59. Côte d'Ivoire has experienced sustained peace and stability for the past 18 months since the signing of the Ouagadougou Agreement. The main achievements during this defining period in the country's history include the end of hostilities between the Forces nouvelles and the national defence and security forces; the removal of the zone of confidence that had previously physically divided the

country; the restoration of the population's right to move freely throughout the country; the successful start of a credible process of identifying the population through the mobile courts operations; the improvement of the human rights situation throughout the country; sustained dialogue and spirit of consensus among the main political leaders; the return to the north of State officials displaced during the conflict; the encouraging rebounding of the economy; and the progress made in the preparations for the elections.

60. The peace process has crossed a critical milestone with the launching of the voter registration process on 15 September. The key stages of the electoral process conducted to date have proceeded in a satisfactory manner, notwithstanding the major logistical challenges encountered. I am particularly pleased about the success of the mobile courts operations and the consensus reached by the parties to resolve arising issues, including the need for supplementary operations of the courts in areas that were previously not adequately covered. It is now imperative to carry forward the simultaneous issuance of identity cards and voter registration in an equally credible and transparent manner. Any arising issues, including the possibility of adjustments in the electoral timetable, should be addressed in accordance with the law governing the electoral time frame and in the same spirit of consensus that has been the hallmark of the successful implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement so far.

61. The certification mandate of my Special Representative will be crucial in ensuring the credibility of the electoral process. In exercising that mandate, my Special Representative will not be focusing on finding fault with the process, but will pursue a constructive approach aimed at anticipating problems and helping the parties and the electoral authorities to effectively address them in a manner that preserves the credibility of the elections. In this regard, he will continue to work closely with the Facilitator and consult with all national and international stakeholders. At the same time, UNOCI will, within its available resources, support the electoral authorities in addressing the formidable logistical and technical challenges they continue to encounter. It will also be essential to involve as many electoral observers as possible, especially from regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the International Organization of La Francophonie, the European Union, as well as various non-governmental organizations and individual countries to enhance the credibility and transparence of the electoral process.

62. The gains made to date in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement were possible thanks to the sustained commitment of the Ivorian parties to the Agreement and the spirit of dialogue and consensus engendered by that Agreement. The Facilitator of the Ivorian peace process, the President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, has remained an intrepid mediator and indispensable pillar in the peace process. Côte d'Ivoire's international partners, including the United Nations, have effectively accompanied the process, monitoring it closely and providing invaluable financial, technical and logistical assistance, as well as crucial capacity-building support for the institutions charged with the implementation of the various key tasks set out in the Ouagadougou Agreement. As the country moves to the next critical stage of the peace process, the presidential election, it is essential to preserve and fully exploit the effective partnership between the Ivorian parties, the Facilitator and the international stakeholders.

63. Although Côte d'Ivoire has successfully traversed the longer part of the treacherous terrain on the journey to the elections, the remaining short distance is still fraught with formidable challenges. Many of the uncompleted tasks could pose serious risks to the elections, and indeed the entire peace process as well as the long-term stability of Côte d'Ivoire, if they are not carefully managed. While the cantonment of former combatants is making progress, the efforts to collect their weapons and place them in secure storage, as required by the Ouagadougou third supplementary agreement, has so far yielded disappointing results. In addition, the issue of payment of allowances to both the cantoned Forces nouvelles ex-combatants and personnel of the national defence and security forces could become a source of disturbances that might undermine the secure environment for the elections. The stalled process of dismantling and disarming the militias in the west, as well as the continued existence of youth groups that have a tendency to resort to politically motivated violence, also pose similar risks for a secure climate for the elections.

64. I am also particularly concerned about the lack of genuine progress in the redeployment of State authority in the north, especially with regard to the centralization of the treasury. This has prevented the full reunification of the country and the complete restoration of State authority throughout the territory of Côte d'Ivoire following the lifting of the zone of confidence. I urge the parties and the Facilitator, with the support of international partners, to persevere in addressing these crucial issues, including through agreement on arrangements for reunifying the armed and security forces and the implementation of an effective reintegration programme for ex-combatants, as well as the civic service programme.

65. As other examples around the world have shown, if not managed properly and transparently, elections, which are intended to consolidate peace and democracy, could become a source of instability. In addition to taking measures to mitigate the risks referred to above in the period leading to the elections, it will also be important to carefully manage the delicate period immediately following the elections. In this regard, I would like to encourage the Ivorian leaders to maintain a commitment to the spirit of mutual accommodation and reconciliation. The successes achieved so far in managing the obstacles that have emerged in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement provide a basis for trust in the capabilities of the Ivorian parties to rise above narrow party interests and put national interests first, in surmounting any potentially destabilizing issues that might arise in the wake of the election.

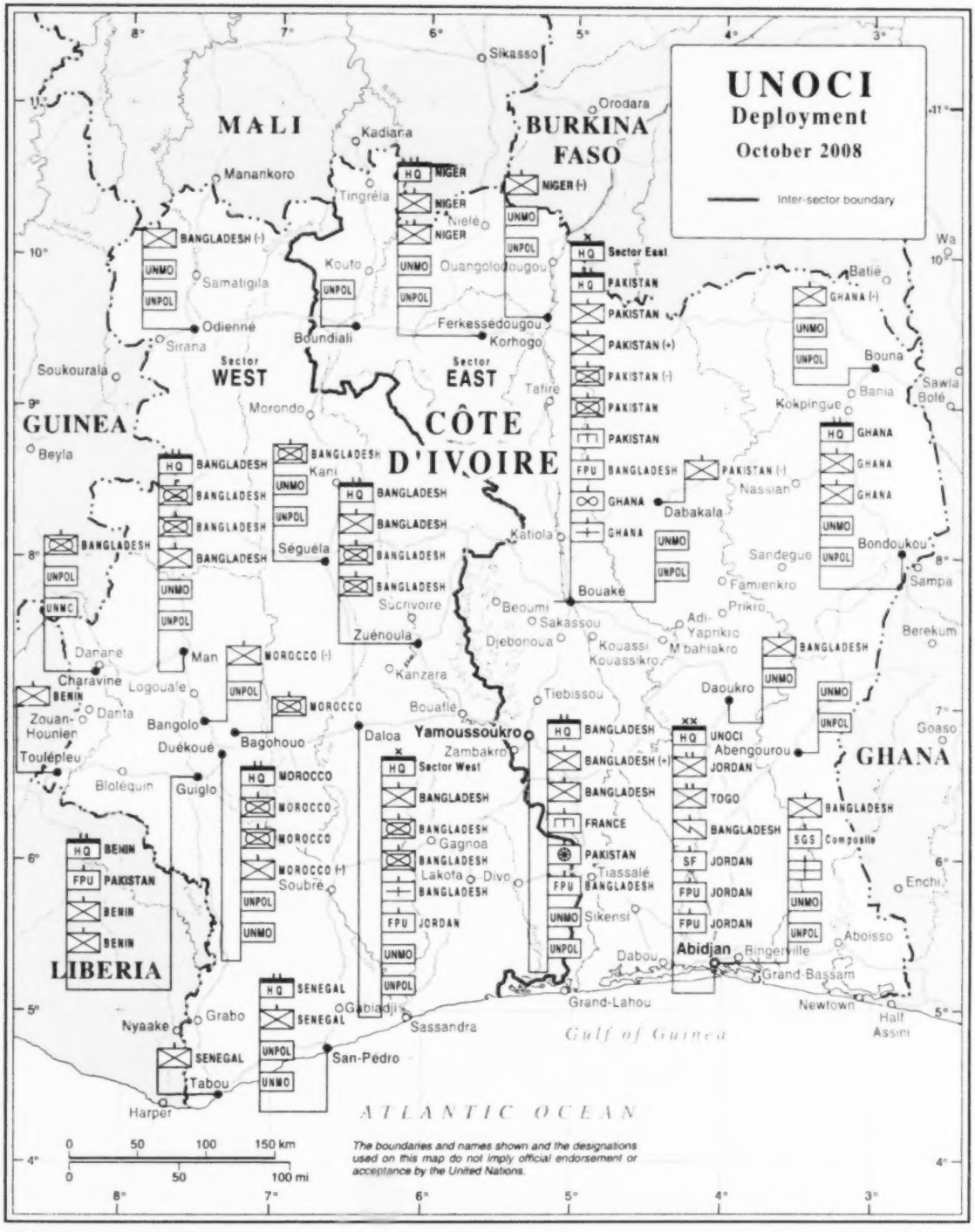
66. In conclusion, I would like to thank my Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, Y. J. Choi, and all UNOCI military, police and civilian personnel for their continued commitment to supporting the peace process. I am also grateful to the Facilitator of the Ivorian peace process, President Blaise Compaoré, and his Special Representative in Côte d'Ivoire, for their tireless facilitation efforts. Finally, I thank all troop- and police-contributing countries, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, humanitarian organizations and multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as international and local non-governmental organizations, for their important contributions to the efforts to restore lasting peace and stability in Côte d'Ivoire.

Annex

United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire: military and police strength as at 1 October 2008

	Military component					
Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Formed police units*	*Civilian police*
Argentina						3
Bangladesh	11	10	2 704	2 725	250	5
Benin	8	7	420	435		51
Bolivia	3			3		
Brazil	4	3		7		
Burundi						14
Cameroon						58
Canada						7
Central African Republic						9
Chad	2			2		18
China	7			7		1
Croatia	2			2		
Djibouti						51
Democratic Republic of the Congo						20
Ecuador	2			2		
El Salvador	3			3		
Ethiopia	2			2		
France	2	10	171	183		11
Gambia	3			3		
Ghana	6	7	534	547		5
Guatemala	5			5		
Guinea	1			1		
India	7			7		
Ireland	2			2		
Jordan	7	12	1 050	1 069	374	9
Libya						2
Madagascar						7
Moldova	4			4		
Morocco		2	722	724		
Namibia	2			2		
Nepal	3	1		4		
Niger	6	3	382	391		42
Nigeria	8			8		
Pakistan	9	10	1 126	1 145	124	1
Paraguay	8	2		10		

Country	*Military component*				*Formed police units*	*Civilian police*
	Military observers	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Total*		
Peru	3			3		
Philippines	4	3		7		
Poland	2			2		
Romania	7			7		
Russian Federation	11			11		
Rwanda						3
Senegal	10	6	320	336		41
Serbia	3			3		
Spain						1
Switzerland						2
United Republic of Tanzania	1	2		3		
Togo	7	6	309	322		9
Tunisia	7	3		10		
Turkey						6
Uruguay	2			2		5
Uganda	4	1		5		
Yemen	8	1		9		7
Zambia	2			2		
Zimbabwe	2			2		
Total	**190**	**89**	**7 738**	**8 017**	**748**	**388**



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